Negro on,

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IN the Green Book for December appears an interesting article which deals with "The Negro on the Stage," written by Bert A. Williams, leading comedian this season with the Follies of 1910. The article:

The public has been kind enough to grant me some slight recognition as an entertainer and a comedian. I may be permitted, therefore, to speak upon the topic of my people's relation to the stage.

Without the slightest desire to exploit my own self, I am tempted to begin by quoting the generous compliment paid me by Booker T. Washington. It forms a kind of text to my subject, and I regret that it was not written of my invalided partner, George Walker, rather than of me, for then I could mention it happily, without any appearance of vainglory. At any rate, Mr. Washington's words:

"The best stage I can give for liking his quaint songs and humorous sayings is that he puts into this form some of the quality and philosophy of the Negro race."

Other men of my own color have done the same; I am a successor not an originator. The Negro has expressed himself upon the stage in a manner that is true to his racial inheritance. When I look back over the list of well known Negro players, I feel that in relation to our opportunities we have done well.

Our race has taken root upon this soil; after two hundred years of struggle we have grown, we have not died out. We have contributed [illegible]

The Negro's beginning as an actual performer in this country may be traced back to an old playbill dated 1820, which announces that "The African Company" will appear in "the theatre at No. 1 Mercer street, in the rear of the First Milestone, Broadway." This troupe presented "Tom and Jerry," with an after-piece called "Obi, or Three Fingered Jack"—rough farces, both of them. I have seen a reprint of this carlo, and was interested to observe that a namesake of mine, "Mr. Williams," was in the cast. The birth of Negro melody in stage form is usually attributed to Gottlieb Graupner, who sang a ballad called "The Gay Negro Boy" in the drama of "Oroonoko," in Boston, 1799. Another old-timer, to whom I must pay my respects, is Andrew Jackson Allen, born in New York in 1776. As a boy, he walked on the stage in "Romeo and Juliet," playing the page who carries the lovers. He was dresser and valet to Henry Wallack, who held him as a chattel slave. Though chiefly famed as a marvelous cook, he wrote songs as well, and in 1815 produced an entertainment called "The Battle of Lake Champlain."

One Negro, at least, has taken rank as an artist in serious drama; he was Ira Aldridge, called "The African Roscius." His career was so brilliant that I may be permitted to speak of it in detail.

His father was the prince, or chief, of the Fulah tribe in Senegal, on the west coast of Africa, and was brought to this country by a missionary who saw that he possessed unusual mental endowments. The senior Aldridge was educated at Schenectady College, New York, and after marrying a woman of his own color, he returned to his own people, upon his patron's advice. Thus Ira Aldridge was born amid a barbarous African tribe, but of cultured parents. He, too, was sent to America for an education, studying at Schenectady as did his father. He planned to enter the ministry, but his tastes led him toward the theatre, into which he was initiated by serving as a valet to Henry Wallack, in New York City. He made his debut at a private performance before an audience of colored people, playing Rolla in "Pizarro." Eminent actors of the day encouraged his ambition, and so, being possessed of some means, he went to England where he would not have to contest race prejudice.

In 1826 Aldridge appeared at the Royal Theatre, London, as Othello. He played in Great Britain for a number of years, touring to all the important cities and gaining access to the leading theatres. His repertory was extensive, including roles—many of which fitted his dark skin—in a number of tragedies, such as the prince in "Oroonoko," dramatized by Thomas Southerne from Mrs. Aphra Behn's novel; Gambine in "The Slave," Zanga in Dr. Young's "Revenge," Richard III, Zarambo and Alhaadra. He even appeared in a translation of Schiller's "Fiesco," receiving the praise of Sheridan Knowles for his scholarly work. At Belfast, Charles Kean thought it an honor to play Iago to his Othello.

Aldridge was versatile, and could turn from classic tragedy to roles commonly identified with the Negro temperament. He was very successful as Mungo, an [illegible] African servant, in "The Padlock," a comic opera (words by Isaac [illegible] and music by Charles Dibdin) which was originally produced at Drury Lane in 1768. And in typical negro songs, such as "Jim Crow" and "Clar' de Kitchen Ole," he was always popular, the ballad chiefly identified with him being "Old Dan Tucker." [illegible] of his talent was known as "Massa in a Cum Tree."

[illegible] the House of Representatives of San Domingo passed resolutions honoring Aldridge as having proved that the colored race was capable of culture and artistic achievement, and made him, in addition, a captain extraordinary to the president of the republic. In Dresden, Jerome Bonaparte, [illegible] Napoleon, [illegible] Aldridge, and the Emperor of Russia presented him with a gold medal. [illegible] Aldridge [illegible] by many years in being "featured" in white companies.

The Black Patti's voice still has its marvelous quality; almost every season she tours the South and the Central American countries at the head of her own company. Cole and Johnson are a clever team of the present day; they are doing what Mr. Walker and myself did several seasons ago, and their "Red Moon" is an example of their creative ability. J. Rosamund Johnson is a gifted composer; he and Cole, who is a good lyricist, had much to do with Klaw and Erlanger's production of "Humpty Dumpty." These two men, by the way, wrote the one-popular "Under the Bamboo Tree" song exploited by Marie Cahill. In many another firstclass musical comedy production, there have been songs written and numbers composed by talented Negroes whose names never appeared on the programs.

be found deep in the heart of this soft-spoken, unemotional man, who has been content to let others enjoy the limelight while he has quietly helped to bring things to pass. Thus he has learned the inner workings of the profession.

May success and a prosperous future remain with him, are the well wishes of yours truly,

AURTHER L. PRINCE.

A GREAT CORNETIST.

The Height of Ambition Reached.

Age Dispatch — 1-27-12

Little attention has been given to the fact that in the course of the year which has just closed a marked change of improvement was unquestionably noticed in regard to the comparison of colored musicians.

Probably only one can be mentioned as a successful cornetist who has worked his way to the ladder of fame. We may note one Perry G. Lowery, a product of Reece Kansas, who began his theatrical career about a quarter of a century ago when every cornetist hoped high,—ridiculously, absurdly high. Well, instead of slowly advancing, many suffered from exaggerated ego, and up to the present time have made a poor progression, although the unfolding of the next ten years will answer. But the fact is worth taking notice of.

Mr. Lowery is today the undisputed king of colored cornetists, and moreover a promoter of theatrical enterprises. He is so unlike and yet so much alike; believes in expressing himself with straightforward simplicity; has plenty of common sense and the saving grace of humor. Spiritualists have said: "His prosperity is annointed with the blessings of the Almighty."

A bright future for performers may